

# Measure Up

**Winter 2012**

**Assessment news for elementary school teachers**



## ***Did you know?***

- ***Around 24,000 eighth-grade students across the nation took the NAEP 2011 writing computer-based assessment (WCBA).***
- ***Around 29,000 twelfth-grade students across the nation took the NAEP 2011 WCBA.***
- ***Around 28,000 fourth-grade students will participate in the pilot of the grade 4 NAEP WCBA in 2012.***

## **NAEP Writing Computer-Based Assessment (WCBA)**

In today's society, writing with paper and pencil has largely been replaced by writing using a computer. Increasingly, as students move through school, they are expected to be familiar with using computers for writing and other subjects. "Computer-based writing" means that students compose and construct their responses using word processing software, with commonly available word processing tools. As writing on computers becomes an increasingly common means of composing, a computer-based assessment is the best method of understanding the writing practices of K-12 students.

### **NAEP 2011 Writing Computer-Based Assessment**

The 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) writing assessment was administered to students in grades 8 and 12 throughout the United States. The assessment was delivered via computer between January and March 2011. Results will be released in 2012. Also in 2012, students will participate in the pilot of the grade 4 writing computer-based assessment (WCBA).

### **NAEP 2012 Pilot of the Writing Computer-Based Assessment at Grade 4**

For the first time, fourth-grade students taking the NAEP 2012 writing computer-based pilot will use a computer to compose and edit their responses. This pilot study will provide an opportunity to gather feedback on the writing items.

The NAEP writing framework, which guides the assessment, takes into account the expanding role of technology and the reality that today's students, at even the earliest grades, increasingly rely on computers to compose and complete school assignments. In anticipation of more widespread access to computers and increased keyboarding instruction in elementary schools, this study will provide an opportunity to examine the feasibility of administering additional computer-based assessments to students in grade 4.

Access the NAEP writing framework at <http://www.nagb.org/publications/frameworks/writing-2011.pdf>



### How will the responses be scored?

Trained scorers will evaluate the responses. For NAEP, scorers are taught to score each item through extensive training using many example responses. They will evaluate four broad features of writing, as follows:

- Development of Ideas
- Organization of Ideas
- Language Facility
- Use of Conventions

## What Does the NAEP Writing Framework Measure?

The NAEP 2011 writing framework identifies three communicative purposes of writing. They are:

- **To Persuade**, in order to change the reader's point of view or affect the reader's action
- **To Explain**, in order to expand the reader's understanding
- **To Convey Experience**, real or imagined, in order to communicate individual and imagined experience to others

These purposes are found throughout the core curriculum in K–12 education—in English language arts, in science, in social studies, and in mathematics—and take many forms, including short stories, personal narratives, essays, reports, summaries, research papers, letters, proposals, newspaper articles, and so on.

On the NAEP writing assessment, persuasive writing tasks will ask writers to convince an audience to take action or change a viewpoint on a variety of topics important to others (e.g., peers, school, the nation). In writing tasks for grade 4, students may be asked to express and support a point of view. Below is an example of a writing task for the purpose *To Persuade* for grade 4.

### Example Writing Task for To Persuade (Grade 4)



Tigers



Rising Stars



Dolphins



Rockets

Imagine that students at your school are going to select a new school mascot. A mascot is an animal or object used to represent a group. For example, many sports teams have mascots.

Four choices are being considered as your school's mascot: Tigers, Rising Stars, Dolphins, and Rockets. You have been asked to choose one of the four mascots and to support your choice in a letter to the school principal.

Write a letter to your principal convincing him or her that your choice should be the school mascot. Be sure to include reasons and examples in your letter.

## NAEP Writing Computer-Based Assessment Tools

In the context of NAEP, “tools” refers to the extensions built into word processing software that help writers modify or revise their text documents. These tools are often used by students when producing texts. In addition to these tools, students will receive a pre-writing brochure and scratch paper to brainstorm. The following list includes common planning and word processing tools available on the WCBA.

- **Editing:** cut, copy, paste, undo/redo
- **Formatting:** font size, bold, italics, underline, and indent/outdent
- **Spelling and Reference:** spell check and thesaurus



## Accessibility of the NAEP Writing Computer-Based Assessment

A key goal of NAEP is to include as many students as possible. The writing computer-based assessment is designed to comply with federal policy, which instructs that electronic information technology be accessible to all people, including those with disabilities. The writing assessment features optional settings that will reduce the need for accommodations, including the following:

- A ‘Speak’ function on computers that can read aloud all or selected portions of directions, tasks, and stimulus materials. (Some stimulus materials will not respond to a ‘Speak’ function but will have separate play buttons.)
- Electronic spell-check and a thesaurus that are incorporated into the interface with user-prompted activation options.
- Adjustable font size up to 48 point (letters about ⅜-inch tall).
- Choice of color schemes, including a high contrast option.
- Use of a highlighter.



Watch the WCBA video tutorials online at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/writing/cba.asp>.

Of the fourth-graders who took the NAEP reading assessment in 2009,

- 89% reported that they had a home computer, and
- 91% reported that they had computers available to them and their teachers for reading and language arts activities.

## Accommodations on the WCBA

As with other NAEP assessments, accommodations such as alterations in the testing setting or timing will be provided. For this assessment, if needed, additional accommodations will be available, such as screen magnification greater than 48 point font and the ability to enlarge graphics. Accommodations such as signed directions can be provided by the school staff. Any change that alters the skill NAEP is designed to measure will not be allowed.

## WCBA Tutorials

Before the assessment begins, students will be shown a tutorial that will help them become familiar with the way material is presented on the computer screen and how to use the program. Students will compose their responses in a word processing program similar to programs commonly used at home and at school. They will be able to use familiar tools for editing, formatting, and text analysis; they will not have access to irrelevant or distracting tools such as clip art, font type and color, or the Internet. Students may ask questions about how to use these features at any time before and during the assessment.

# What Is The Nation's Report Card?

The Nation's Report Card informs the public about the academic achievement of elementary and secondary students in the United States. Report cards communicate the findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a continuing and nationally representative measure of achievement in various subjects over time.

Since 1969, NAEP assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and other subjects. By collecting and reporting information on student performance at the national, state, and local levels, NAEP is an integral part of our nation's evaluation of the condition and progress of education. Only information related to academic achievement and relevant variables is collected. The privacy of individual students and their families is protected, and the identities of participating schools are not released.

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